

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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October 29, 1980

ALL-COUNTY LETTER NO. 80-63

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CIVIL RIGHTS COORDINATORS

SUBJECT: CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING GUIDELINES

REFERENCE:

This letter provides guidelines to be used by county welfare departments in developing cultural awareness training programs for their staff as required by State Department of Social Services (SDSS) Manual of Policies and Procedures (MPP), Division 21-117.3. As a result of requests by many counties for technical assistance in the development of their programs and our review of cultural awareness training sessions, the department is releasing these guidelines to enhance uniformity and consistency in this aspect of the Civil Rights Program.

The following minimum guidelines shall be applied in developing county cultural awareness training programs:

1. Efforts are to be directed into two main areas:
 - a. General cultural awareness training which serves to sensitize staff to the existence of cultural differences and the need to recognize such differences without emphasizing any particular group.
 - b. Specific cultural awareness training which identifies cultures predominant in the county and examines their needs and characteristics in depth.
2. Each county must develop a cultural awareness training plan as a part of their overall Civil Rights Plan. The plan shall include a description of both areas of training. It shall specify which target groups will be covered and describe how and why these groups were identified and selected. Consideration is to be given to groups based on race, color and national origin. Any group which falls into one of these categories and represents a significant segment of the county's population or the county's welfare caseload should be covered under the cultural awareness training program.

3. For each target group selected to be covered under race, color and national (or ethnic) origin, the following areas should be specifically addressed during the training:
 - a. Religious beliefs - i.e., predominant beliefs, effect on daily life;
 - b. Family life - i.e., family size, head of household, structure;
 - c. Self concept - i.e., aspirations, goals, career objectives;
 - d. Language - i.e., communication barriers, language characteristics, dialects;
 - e. Other traits - i.e., values, education, economics, cultural differences.
4. The cultural awareness training should be designed to point out how cultural differences relate to the functions of public contact staff, such as receptionists, eligibility workers, social workers, etc. For example, one of the functions of an eligibility worker is to collect raw data on income, resources and residence. If the eligibility worker is dealing with an American Indian, he/she should be aware that the term "home" could mean the homeland or reservation to some Indians and not necessarily their current residence.
5. The cultural awareness training program should attempt to point out and clarify common misconceptions and stereotypes of the target groups being addressed. It should not serve to reinforce stereotypes by implying that individuals from a particular culture always adhere to the predominant characteristics of that culture.
6. The county shall have a training plan which shall involve community representatives and groups as much as possible in cultural awareness program development. The plan should indicate what groups were involved and to what extent.
7. The plan, any modifications to it and the evaluation process also must involve community groups which are effected by the training. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that the county welfare department has a method of measuring the effectiveness of the training in accomplishing its goal.
8. When possible, the county welfare department should involve community groups and/or representatives in cultural awareness training presentations.

The Civil Rights Bureau is available to assist in all aspects of developing and evaluating the training. Each county's assigned analyst will be in contact with appropriate county staff to offer such assistance and discuss the guidelines in greater detail.

Any questions or comments you may have will be appreciated. Please contact the Civil Rights Bureau at (916) 322-4134.

Sincerely,



CLAUDE E. FINN
Deputy Director
Administration Division

cc: CWDA